

# CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS *in California*

United States Department of Agriculture   Natural Resources Conservation Service   Davis, California



**Urban  
Conservation  
Underway in  
L.A.**

**See Page 8!**

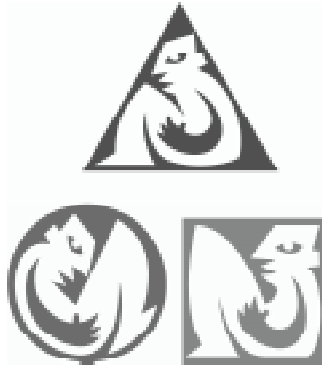
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# The Trouble with Labels

By

*Karen L. Fullen, Soil Conservationist, Fresno Field Office*



Recently, I had the good fortune to attend the 10th Annual Central California Women's Conference in Fresno. I found it to be a very worthwhile use of my time and would encourage other NRCS employees to attend similar events. Participants were able to hear speakers on topics ranging from career development to relationships in four seminar sessions. Each session had twelve or thirteen different seminars from which to choose.

One thing that struck me during the conference relates to some civil rights issues I've been reading about lately. Of the four speakers in the seminars I attended, I would have identified two as European-American, one as American Indian, and one as African-American based on their outward appearance. However, in the course of the seminars, three of the speakers revealed their actual ethnic backgrounds. The "African-American" was over one-fourth European-American as well as part American Indian. The "American Indian" also had Asian, African, and European ancestors. And one of the "European-American" women was fully one-half Cherokee!

These speakers revealed their ethnic backgrounds while describing to the audience where they came from and what had contributed to their uniqueness. Their multi-ethnicity was obviously very important to them. It occurred to me what a poor job government and other agencies do when they

attempt to describe people's heritage by checking a single box on a form! Worse, in NRCS we make this decision based on the same visual clues that were obviously inadequate for me in judging the ethnicity of the speakers I heard. Worse still, in some cases we may never actually meet the person, but have only a name by which to judge.

This week I read a copy of the minutes of July's Civil Rights Team meeting that came in the office mail. One item being considered is the development of a form that would allow customers to identify their own ethnicity. I also read in our local newspaper that the Census Bureau is considering allowing people to check more than one box if appropriate. These changes would be a start toward solving the problem.

Perhaps the ultimate answer lies in being able to move beyond the whole ethnicity/gender issue. The "African-American" woman's speech was entitled Racism and Sexism are Figments of the Imagination. She maintained that since we choose to give life to the ideas of racism and sexism, we can also choose to end their existence.

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*What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.  
— W. Shakespeare*

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Questions, comments, and contributions may be forwarded to: Current Developments, NRCS Office of Public Affairs, 2121-C Second Street, Suite 102, Davis, California 95616. Call (916) 757-8260 or fax (916) 757-8217.

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# *Gone but not Forgotten*

By **PHIL HOGAN**, *District Conservationist, Woodland FO*

**T**he natural resources conservation community lost one of its own on November 9. I also lost a great friend.

**Gene Guenza** was part of the "Dixon Gang" when I first met him in 1981. He was a Soil Conservationist in the Dixon Field Office in 1981 when I started with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in Woodland. He was a close friend from the beginning.

I remember the softball games that the local field offices had periodically. Gene helped to organize them. Besides being fun, they served to build and maintain professional camaraderie amongst the conservationists working for SCS and the RCDs.

I liked Gene from the beginning partly because he was the only one in the agency that laughed at my dumb jokes. I guess we shared the same sense of "humor."

My nickname for Gene was "Dr. Guenza, the Soil Doctor," although I usually just called him "Guenza" and he called me "Hogan." We had such good times

together that as soon as we saw each other at a meeting or training session, we did not have to say anything to start laughing. When times got rough for me, Gene could always sense it, and we would go out for a "few" beers, or just talk.

Not only were Gene and I close friends, but my wife Janet and Gene became friends as well. We all had good times together: the trip down to San Luis Obispo to visit Gene, our visit with Gene and his mom in 1990 in Santa Rosa, our boating excursion on Folsom Lake, getting to meet his brother Ron and sister-in-law Jean.

Gene of course was in my wedding party when I got married eight years ago. After the rehearsal dinner for the wedding, I got in my car and drove down Highway 50 towards home. I saw lights flickering in back of me, thought it was a CHP patrolman, and pulled over. Turned out it was Gene. We had no time to talk before about the wedding, and he felt so strongly about the marriage

working out that we spent an hour at a gas station just talking. He really cared!

Albert Schweitzer wrote: "No one has ever come back from the other world. I can't console you, but one thing I can tell you, as long as my ideals are alive I will be alive."

Gene's ideals of community service, teaching our children about the importance of natural resource conservation, and working with landowners so that we can pass on something to our children are still inspirational for me and others. Because of Gene, there is a little less suffering, anguish, and distress in our little part of the world. I know that Gene's memory will always be alive for me.

I had not talked with Gene for a few weeks before his death. Perhaps this goes without saying, but please, if you have a good friend (NRCS or not) that you have not been in contact with for a while, call or write a note, find out how they are doing, and most of all, tell them you care, and that you miss and love them.



## **CALIFORNIA NRCS LOSES ONE OF ITS OWN**

Gene Guenza, Soil Conservationist at the Petaluma Field Office who was known for his caring ways and his assistance to handicapped children, died on November 9 after suffering a heart attack. He was 46.

A fitness buff, Guenza was on his daily run near his home in Windsor when he collapsed. He was pronounced dead at his Windsor home after efforts to revive him failed.

Guenza was well respected in the Sonoma County farming community. He spent a lot of time educating children and the general public about soil erosion and the basics of agriculture. As a soil conservationist, Guenza handled most of the soil conservation work in northern Sonoma County, giving landowners technical advice and assisting them in reducing soil erosion and conserving natural resources.



# HEIDRICK AG HISTORY CENTER HAS HUGE OPENING

*By*  
**Jeni Rohlin, Public Affairs Intern, Davis**

The grand opening of the Heidrick Ag History Center in Woodland drew hundreds to a spectacular exhibit featuring the largest and most diverse collection of vintage farm equipment and trucks in the country.

The call to rediscover America's agricultural history drew not only the local media but also Congressional Representative **Vic Fazio**, who spoke at the opening after riding to the event on an antique fire engine, and Deputy Secretary **Richard Rominger**, who spoke on three different occasions during the festivities.

"Every piece of equipment here, every truck and tractor, tells a story for those willing to listen," said Rominger. "Individual stories—sweat, hopes, dreams and failures—and together, the story of the equipment that plowed, threshed and harvested this state and this nation to agricultural greatness."

NRCS Public Affairs officer **Anita Brown** and District Conservationist **Phil Hogan** set up an exhibit with two panels illuminated by spotlights. One panel focused on the history of NRCS and its birth in the Dust Bowl days of the 1930's. The other panel concentrated on current developments in NRCS and modern conservation practices. The NRCS publication "A Geography of Hope" was a very popular item amongst the public.

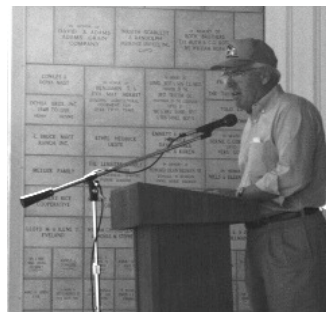
There were several period pieces exhibited, such as a 1915 Breeding steam truck, whose production was never actualized due to a halt in its manufacture due to the advent of the gasoline engine. Also displayed was a 1916 Model TT 1-ton flatbed truck, which sat on a piece of old El Centro desert



*Lew Harris, President of the Woodland Chamber of Commerce, cut the ribbon to officially open the center.*

wooden road, used frequently from 1916-1926. These pieces, among others, certainly brought to the spectators a deeply felt pride and palpable nostalgia for the Old America.

The event drew interest from all over the world, with inquiries from as far away as Europe, Canada, and China.



*Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Richard Rominger (right) and Rep. Vic Fazio (above) were among the many prestigious speakers.*





# A CALL TO THE SMALL

By  
*Anita K. Brown, State Information Officer, Davis*



How does USDA define a small farmer? Someone under 5'6". Or so goes the often-repeated joke. But one charge—among many—of a new Commission established by **Secretary Glickman** is indeed to define the term. Sacramento was one of four sites nationwide visited by the Commission as it endeavored to listen to the unique concerns of those who own or manage small farms and to come up with possible ways that USDA could help sustain their operations.

While all District Conservationists were invited to help spread the word, sociologists **Sharon Nance**, Fresno; and **Dan Mountjoy**, Salinas; joined District Conservationist **Frank Menez** in informing the groups that might have the most need to share their concerns with the Commission.

Interest was high in California. Forty people had registered to speak by the time the panel began on September 15. Another dozen or so registered on site. The Commission, headed by **Deputy Secretary Rich Rominger** stayed until 8 p.m. to hear all the testimony. Some Hmong farmers from the Central Valley also travelled to Washington D.C. to tell officials there about problems they had encountered obtaining USDA loans.

Secretary Glickman has promised that the Clinton Administration will not "turn its back" on the more than one million small farmers in the nation but will help them "evolve and fit into this new economy." The Commission's report is due out this month.

## Personnel Actions

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Date</u>
Lisa Shanks	San Francisco FO	Reassignment	Res Consv.	9-28
Carter Christenson	Salinas AO	Reassignment	Area Consv.	9-28
Grace Gomez	Modesto FO	Promotion	Soil Con Tec.	8-31
Jaime Fiack	Willows FO	Promotion	STEP	8-31
Farewells:				
Victoria Saylor	Yosemite SSO	Exp of Appt	Bio Sci Tech.	9-30
Kennard Williams	Arkansas	Transfer	Soil Consv.	9-28
Reshonda Williams	Arkansas	Transfer	Soil Consv.	9-28
Wendell Gilgert	Colorado	Transfer	Soil Consv.	9-14
Scott Sargent	Davis	Exp of Appt	Reader	9-15

# EWP Packs Timely Fix for Cosumnes Levees

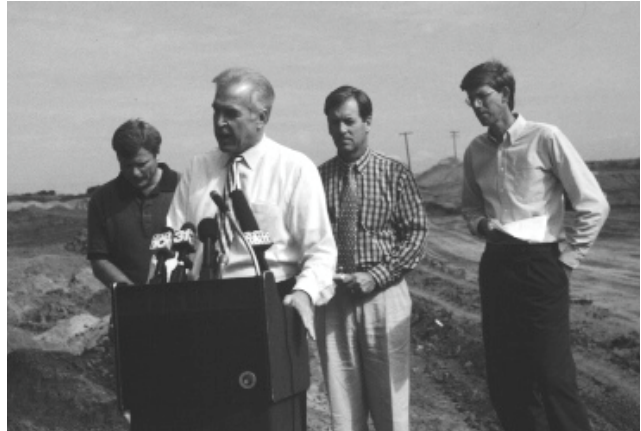
By

*Anita K. Brown, State Information Officer, Davis*

**California has the dubious honor of hosting dozens of Emergency Watershed Protection projects in the past decade. Few, if any single projects, however, have been as large as the \$5 million levee repair work currently being completed on the Cosumnes River in Sacramento County.**

The privately built and operated levees were ripped apart in last winter's historic floods and it was months before it was decided how the needed repairs would be handled and by whom. When additional emergency funding was made available in June NRCS-California stepped forward to fund 75 percent of the project. The County of Sacramento is acting as a sponsor and California's Office of Emergency Services is funding the remaining 25 percent cost share.

On Sept. 18, the program sponsors joined State Senator **Patrick Johnston**, State Assemblyman **Larry Bowler**, County Board of Supervisors repre-



*Shown above are Mike Wackman, Aide for Congressman Pombo, State Assemblyman Larry Bowler, State Senator Patrick Johnston, and Sacramento County Board of Supervisors Representative Dan Nottoli.*

sentative **Don Nottoli**, and Congressman Pombo's Aide, **Mike Wackman**, for a press conference and celebration. In the background the earth movers lent active visuals as they busily remolded the 140,000 cubic yards of fill involved in repairing the levees. Farmers and ranchers along the 24,000 acres of cropland will be pleased to know that the contractors have successfully met their deadline of having the riverside work completed by Oct. 15. All work is scheduled to be finished by mid-December.

"Because of the size of this project, some people suggested it could not be completed before heavy winter flow," said **Mark Parson**, District Conservationist at the Sacramento Field Office. "The sponsor, contractor, and agency team have done an outstanding job in fixing all of the critical levee breaks before winter. We should all be gratified that we accomplished the goal of providing protection to important farmland, homes, and infrastructure before winter rains."



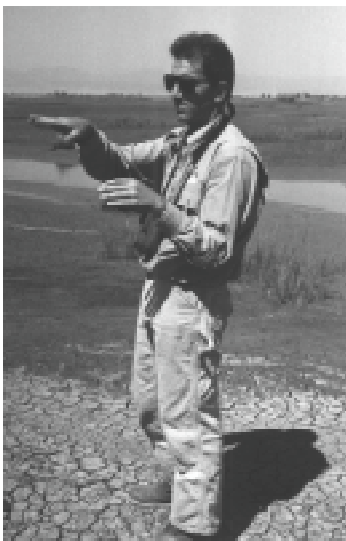
*Levee repair of the Cosumnes River site was the largest single EWP undertaken in California in the last decade.*

# Willows Biologist is Good News for Land Users and Wildlife

By  
Dave Sanden, Writer-Editor, Davis

Land owners served by the Willows Field Office have gained an important new resource—a wildlife biologist—thanks to an agreement between NRCS and the California Waterfowl Association (CWA).

Under the terms of the agreement signed on July 7, the field office will provide office space to **Rob Capriola**, CWA Waterfowl Habitat Wildlife Biologist (*shown right*), who in turn will assist with wetland restorations and provide technical and educational assistance to land users in the area.



“Not only will this arrangement benefit farmers, hunters, and wetland managers in four counties, it will also help NRCS, CWA, and the Glenn County Resource Conservation District (RCD) complete more work for less money,” notes Capriola.

Capriola’s work will take him to projects throughout the North Valley, including Glenn, Colusa, Butte, and Sutter Counties. Potential customers range from managers of wildlife areas and private duck clubs to farmers who want to set aside part of their land to create wetlands.

“Generally, wetland managers already know what they want to do,” Capriola said. “What I can do is help them accomplish that by plugging them into programs, such as USDA’s Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) or grants provided under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). On the other hand, farmers who want to develop wetland habitat on their land need a lot of assistance in making the transition from farmer to wetland manager.”

Capriola points out some of the management considerations farmers face when they create wetlands on their land. “Waterfowl need water, but they also need plenty

of natural vegetation for cover in the spring and summer and for food in winter,” he said. “To maintain good habitat for waterfowl, farmers must learn how to grow weeds rather than crops. They also need to develop a regular schedule for flooding and drying down on seasonal wetlands—and timing is important.”

NRCS District Conservationist **Wendell Gilgert** is enthusiastic about trading office space for Capriola’s expertise. “A wildlife biologist working in our office is a great resource and fills a definite need,” Gilgert said. “He can provide technical assistance and educational outreach that we just don’t have the time to do.”

Educating people about wildlife is important to Capriola. “Land users can do many things, at little cost, that benefit waterfowl tremendously,” said Capriola. “Small changes in farming practices can have a big impact because it happens on such a large scale,” he said. “For example, slowing winter wheat harvesting by 20 percent can increase the survival rate of nesting waterfowl by as much as 50 percent. Likewise, using bells or flushing bars on harvesting equipment saves a great number of nesting female ducks.”

Before joining CWA, Capriola worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Humboldt Bay Wildlife Refuge. He also served as a wildlife biologist for five years at various sites in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. Through a previous agreement, CWA has been assisting NRCS with wetland restorations in Northern California since June.

“We can get more done working together,” said Gilgert. “This arrangement will strengthen our partnership with CWA, allow us to provide better service to our customers, and help us attain our goals under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan.”

# L.A. URP



Above, **Glen Duke**, Landscape Architect & Echo Park Community Garden Coalition member (left), with **Chelsea Cochrane**, URP Coordinator, (right) at the Echo Park Community Garden. Below, **Rita Bickel**, Natural Resources Manager of Urban Team, with **Martin Ludlow**, Project Manager of Los Angeles Conservation Corps Greening Project. In 1996, LACC headed a major greening project, planting almost 100 state trees and thousands of square feet of vines, to reduce heat island effects and beautify the neighborhood.



*By Jeni Rohlin, Public Affairs Intern, Davis*

The Urban Resources Partnership (URP), launched in Los Angeles in 1995, is comprised of seven agencies working together to help local groups and communities develop projects that provide environmental education to inner city youth and promote job skills training and opportunities to people of all ages. The USDA provides \$500,000 in funding through NRCS and the Forest Service to selected community groups who develop grassroots-based solutions to urban resource dilemmas such as loss of open space and wetlands, degraded habitats, erosion, soil compaction and water pollution.

The Los Angeles Urban Resource Partnership is funding twenty projects this year. Examples include *Building a Green Community*, a project at the Samuel Gompers Middle School whose goal is to establish an environmental math/science academy providing students with the skills necessary to solve real environmental problems faced by the Watts community. A community gardening project, underway in *Echo Park*, is developing a vacant lot into a small park-like rest stop with benches, bird feeders, flowers and shrubs. Another community garden project is the goal of *Mothers of East Los Angeles* who are working to transform an empty lot frequented by drug dealers into an area of gardens and educational workshops. The reduction of landfill space and of contamination in the Santa Monica Bay are the goals of the *Chrysalis Streetworks Recycling Program* as local merchants and manufacturers work with homeless people to collect and recycle waste.



# Projects '97

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## The URP Partners

- ★ NRCS
- ★ U.S. Forest Service
- ★ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- ★ UDSI National Park Service
- ★ California Department of Conservation
- ★ Antelope Valley RCD
- ★ City of Los Angeles

*Top: Alice Young, Urban Team Soil Conservationist, works with students at Samuel Gompers Middle School.*

*Center: Chrysalis Street Works Recycling Project. Chelsea Cochrane, URP Coordinator (left); Linda Wallace, Recycling Coordinator (right); two workers loading cardboard for recycling onto truck (center).*

*Bottom: Eastside Community Garden and Education Center. Chelsea Cochrane, URP Coordinator (left); Elsa Lopez, Project Manager for Madres del Este de Los Angeles Santa Isabel (right).*

**URP will hold its award ceremony on November 6, 1997. For more information on the event, contact program coordinator Chelsea Cochrane at 213-580-1055.**

# The Lake Tahoe Presidential Forum

*By Joseph Thompson, District Conservationist, S. Lake Tahoe*

**President Clinton** and **Vice President Gore** came to Lake Tahoe in July to recognize the importance of this national treasure, highlight the success of collaborative efforts of environmentalists and the business community, and reaffirm this administration's commitment to protecting the lake.

In preparation for the President's visit a series of three workshops were held to clarify local resource needs: a Water Quality workshop on June 18; a Forest Ecosystem Restoration, Recreation, and Tourism workshop on June 30; and a Transportation workshop on July 19.

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to represent NRCS as a participant in the Water Quality Workshop, Forest Ecosystem Restoration Workshop, Vice Presidential Forum and Presidential Forum. As part of the Forest Ecosystem Restoration Workshop, I had the honor of presenting the Nevada Tahoe Resource Conservation District's Third Creek Stream Environment Zone Restoration Project. This project was chosen as one of the sites to be visited by USDA Secretary **Dan Glickman** and USDI Secretary **Larry Babbitt**, with their deputies and assistants, and many other dignitaries. It was designed by NRCS (**Tom Benson** et al) and sponsored by the Incline Village General Improvement District. The project showcases NRCS's work on an innovative and collaborative effort which addresses water quality, riparian habitat, erosion and recreation issues.

I received many positive comments along with some challenging questions from the Secretaries and Senators. Immediately following the site visit I



*Secretary Glickman (center left) inspects a sediment basin on lower Third Creek.*



*Joe Thompson (right) explains the flood flow function of the Third Creek Project to Deputy Secretary Rominger, Under Secretary Lyons, and other visiting officials.*

participated as a panelist in a question and answer session with the cabinet members and the political representatives.

I was also allowed to represent NRCS at a workshop held by the Vice President on July 24, and I spoke to him briefly about NRCS's efforts in the Tahoe Basin.

The President arrived July 26 and after touring the lake signed an Executive Order directing specific Federal actions to be implemented to protect the water quality of Lake Tahoe and reestablish the Washoe tribe's presence at the lake. I represented NRCS at a following workshop and had the opportunity to shake the President's hand at the conclusion.

The President's Executive Order represents approximately \$50 million in increased Federal program support over the next five years in the Tahoe Basin.

The action specific to NRCS reads, "The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide technical expertise to implement a 'backyard conservation' initiative for the individual home owners who ask for assistance with nutrient and water management of their landscape. NRCS will also provide technical assistance to individuals in local communities with erosion and sediment control efforts on private land." In addition to these actions NRCS may also be committing to an update of the Tahoe Basin Soil Survey.

# \$1.9 Million Restoration for Tribal Slough

By

*Jennifer Boado, Soil Conservationist, Hanford FO, and  
Scott Turner, Agricultural Engineer, Los Banos FO*

In the fall of 1996, the Tachi Yocut tribe from the Santa Rosa Rancheria contacted the Hanford Field Office for technical assistance to restore the portion of Mussel Slough that is on tribal lands. The slough has been cut off from its original water source and outlet for several decades. As a result, the water in the slough has become stagnant and loaded with organic matter.

Working with the tribal council, District Conservationist **Vince Moreno** and Soil Conservationist **Jennifer Boado**, from the Hanford Field Office, and Agricultural Engineer **Scott Turner**, from the Los Banos Field Office, worked out a plan to restore the slough to its original clear-water condition.

Under the plan, water will be supplied to the slough during the normal irrigation season and from flood releases from the Kings River using an existing irrigation canal that ends at the head of the slough. Because a constant flow is required to maintain water quality in the slough system, a 35-acre pond will be constructed to hold about 245 acre-feet of water. Water from the pond will be released into the slough continuously, and the pond will be stocked with a variety of fish. Several islands will be constructed to serve as protected nesting areas for migratory waterfowl.



*Members of the Tachi Yocut tribe clear diseased trees in Mussel Slough, where proposed work will restore historical conditions.*

The lack of an outlet will be addressed by the creation of a 45-acre agroforestry planting along the slough. The planting has been designed to use all of the water that will flow through the slough as irrigation water. Because of the variety of species to be planted, the agroforestry planting will provide excellent wildlife habitat.

All of the surveying, engineering, and planning for the project have been completed, and the tribe is currently clearing all of the dead and diseased trees from the slough. The \$1.9 million project should be completed in the summer of 1998.



*Over 20,000 pounds of seed were dropped during the day-long operation to prevent erosion on charred hills like this one.*

## 1,300 Charred Acres Reseeded

By *Jeni Rohlin, Public Affairs Intern, Davis*

On October 21, NRCS and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection joined forces to reseed 1,300 recently burned acres in Yuba County. NRCS funded 50 percent of the \$35,000 project through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program. "The aerial seeding began in the morning and lasted most of the day," said District Conservationist **Ernie Paschke**.

The project was undertaken to quickly revegetate hills in the most intensely burned areas before winter rains to control erosion. The reseeded area represents 13 percent of the total acreage burned in the Yuba County Williams Fire on September 27-28, 1997. The fire destroyed about 95 homes and commercial structures.



# Manure Management

## A Giant Leap for the Dairy Community

By

*Mark C. Meissner, Soil Conservationist, Eureka*

Has this ever happened to you in a social setting? Someone asks about your work, and you explain that you help private landowners fix erosion problems, heal streams, keep manure out of creeks for the sake of water quality, etc. At that point, the listener says your work sounds interesting. You turn away for a moment to grab a pretzel, then find yourself muttering to the punchbowl when you turn back around, left to wonder if it might have been the manure part.

No longer settling for inferior status, manure management is coming out swinging in Humboldt County through a determined, voluntary effort linking NRCS, dairy operators, the Humboldt County RCD (HCRCD), California Coastal Conservancy, and water quality regulators.

OK, so manure is often the butt of jokes. How seriously is it taken up here along the North Coast? Over the past four years, a series of grants and cost-share programs for improved manure containment and utilization have brought a total of about \$460,000 to Humboldt County. Almost all of this money has been earmarked for the lush pastureland of the 30,000-acre, biologically rich Eel River Delta. This area receives about 40 inches of rain during the wet season, and, from a surface water quality standpoint, the high rainfall presents difficult challenges because of animal confinement, flooding, high water tables, saturated soils, and slow nutrient uptake by forage.

In Humboldt County, 1997 marked the start of two programs that were combined for greatest benefit to dairies – EQIP and a 319(h) non-point pollution source implementation and demonstration grant. The three-year, \$189,000 grant was awarded to the Humboldt County RCD through a chain joining HCRCD with EPA, the State Water Resources Control Board, NRCS, and the California Coastal Conservancy.



*Earthen ponds, or concrete manure storage facilities such as this one, are components of North Coast dairy waste management systems. These systems commonly include roof runoff capture, 60 days minimum storage, a pump/agitator, and enough pipeline to apply the manure to the pasture.*

Under combined EQIP/319 funding, 50 percent of a dairy waste management project's cost will be paid from the 319 grant up to a maximum of \$10,000. The Conservation Work Group Committee decided to use EQIP to pay for 50 percent of the remainder of the cost, leaving the landowner responsible for only 25 percent.

Through a ranking and selection process that favors funding for dairies that have already made significant progress, complete manure management systems are the finished product. In fact, the local 319 Selection Committee requires complete systems as a funding condition. About 20 dairies will install complete systems over the next two years under this dual cost-share approach, so we have good reason to be excited.

The shrewd guidance of HCRCD's Dairy Waste Committee provides a fine example of local leadership stepping up to solve local problems before they become larger issues.



# Soil Scientist to the Rescue!

*By Jim Regal, Soil Survey Project Leader, NE Kern*

**Christopher Grimes**, the Director of Maintenance and Operations for the Tehachapi High School District, recently discovered that he had a soil problem with the school's football field. In the process of reshaping the surface of the field to create a raised crown in its center, clayey topsoil was used. The field now had a problem with water ponding on the surface following irrigation or rainfall. Also, the surface was so compacted that grass would not root into it. Attempts to correct the problem by ripping the surface failed.

Chris called me at the Bakersfield Soil Survey Office. I conducted some soil tests and also sent some samples to a golf course architect who volunteered to do some additional soil analysis. The tests showed that the soil classified as SC, according to the engineering classification system, which is sand with clay—too much clay to be used for the surface soil. This soil texture would be more useful for sealing pond bottoms than for surfacing material. I informed Chris that the surface soil for an athletic field has very specific requirements, and the chances of using

a standard topsoil and having satisfactory performance are very remote.

I suggested that the new surface soil be completely removed. The next step involved importing 160 tons of washed medium and coarse sand. This sand was blended with some of the clayey topsoil and compost. The final mixture was sandy enough to provide rapid drainage so it could be used even during light rainfall, and reduced ability to be compacted. It is very important that the surface does not become compacted even during periods of wetness and heavy foot traffic. It also had enough clay to provide sufficient water holding capacity for the grass and sufficient cohesion to make a firm running surface. The compost improved fertility so that the grass would grow better.

Chris was able to complete the renovation within his budget of about \$10,000. I shared with Chris that softball fields in Bakersfield had been resurfaced for a combined cost of nearly \$1,000,000.

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## Q&A on Administrative Convergence

*excerpts from a National Office Briefing Paper*

### **What is Administrative Convergence?**

**A**—A plan authorized by Secretary Glickman that consolidates the administrative and information technology support functions of FSA, NRCS, and RD. The Secretary has stated that there will be no consolidation of the agencies' program delivery services.

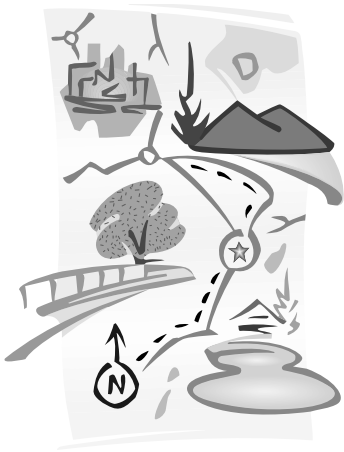
### **How will implementing this plan affect the job security of USDA employees?**

**A**—The Secretary has emphasized that this convergence is to be "employee friendly." If possible, reductions-in-force will be avoided. Since this process is scheduled to take place over the next five years, much of the downsizing could take place through normal attrition. Buyouts and earlyouts will also be used.

### **What changes in information technology will be seen at the field office level?**

**A**—Field office personnel will see changes in information technology that will improve their ability to serve their customers. There will be new telecommunications infrastructures that will include an integrated E-mail system and access to the Internet. Satellite downlinking will be available. There also will be support for distance learning and visual communications.

**Editor:** The above is only a brief sketch of the overall process. You may also get information from Administrative Convergence Action Team (ACAT) at <http://www.acat.usda.gov>—or by dialing, toll free, 800-384-8090. For hearing impaired employees, it is available on TDD at 202-720-7882.



# caligrams . . .

## Killer Weed?

*From an article submitted by Sharon Norris, PAS, Boise, ID*

A USDA soil scientist in Idaho has reported a devastating experience with knapweed that resulted in cancer and amputation of two fingers.

The soil scientist said he pulled some of the nasty weeds with his bare hands and had a small cut on one of his fingers. The cut was slow to heal, and six months later he developed a lump in the finger. About six months after the initial doctor visit, his finger got worse. He went to a hand surgeon who operated and found the lump to be a very aggressive benign tumor. A month or so later the tumor came back, only worse, resulting in a second surgery. Then the tumor started spreading towards the hand, so the little finger was amputated. Then it spread to the ring finger, which was also removed.

The tumors all occurred in the tendon sheath and could not be treated with chemo or radiation. The only way to get them all was by removing the fingers.

Doctors at the University of Washington said there is a compound in Knapweed sap that is cancer-causing. The compound was isolated in Russian knapweed and probably occurs in Spotted and Diffuse knapweed also. It is not known if the carcinogen is released during a fire.

Bottom line: Anyone working in or around areas where knapweed is prevalent needs to take extra safety precautions.

## Farewell to the Chief

*By Sammy Moore Jr, Editorial Assistant, Davis*



Chief **Paul Johnson** brought to an end what has been a very active and creative four years in NRCS in announcing his resignation, effective November 8. The Chief will return to his farm in Iowa.

The Chief said, "It has been an honor to serve NRCS, conservation partners, and private landowners these past four years, but it is now time to go home." He said he longs to once again see darkness and hear silence at the end of the day. Chief Johnson outlined how NRCS and its partnerships have grown stronger. He pointed proudly to conservation progress that has been made. In the end the Chief said, "Thanks for what you've done and what you do." And we say, Thank you Chief, you steered the course wisely and we wish you well!

## Combining Forces to Analyze a Watershed

**By Kate Simpson, Information/Education Tech., Weaverville FO**

A new approach was used this year in Trinity County to complete a watershed analysis (WA) on the East Fork/Smokey Creek watershed in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. NRCS joined the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and a team of other specialists to complete the analysis. The WA covered two adjacent watersheds because they share many characteristics.

The team included specialists from NRCS, USFS, the Trinity County Resource Conservation District, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Humboldt State University, Pacific Watershed Associates, and private consultants including a registered professional forester. USFS normally funds and completes WAs alone, but the combined forces of this innovative partnership helped speed up the process and produced results that one agency working alone may not have been able to achieve.

Watershed analysis is done to scientifically survey an area for information about its past, present, and desired future conditions so management decisions can be made based on this input. Particularly valuable is information from the public, especially firsthand accounts from landowners and longtime residents of the study area, who can provide insights to the team.

Public input was solicited in the WA process. The draft copy has been completed, and the final should be out soon. The team was asked to do a presentation on the WA at the Bioregional Gathering in Eureka. We were glad to be able to join this effort and hope it will be a model for future endeavors.

## State Soil Celebration Held in Madera

**By Lori Perez, Office Automation Assistant, Fresno AO**

On October 21, a ceremony was held at Martin Luther King, Jr., Middle School in Madera to celebrate recognition of the San Joaquin Soil Series as the State Soil of California.

The legislation for an official state soil was written and initiated by the students, who have spent years studying soils as part of their science class. The students presented scientific, historic, and cultural information to the state legislature in support of the State Soil bill earlier this year.

State Senator **Dick Monteith**, the bill's sponsor, spoke during the ceremony and participated in an open panel discussion. Also attending were State Assemblyman **George House**, aides of several other state legislators, and representatives from NRCS and other state and Federal agencies. Hanford Soil Scientist **Kerry Arroues** presented Monteith with a soil monolith of the San Joaquin series, which will hang in the State Capitol.

The San Joaquin Soil Series will be submitted to the National Soil Survey Committee for consideration as the official National Soil of the U.S. in 1999.



**See you next issue!**

## **CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS** *in California*

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